

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

May 12, 2015

The Honorable Thomas Wheeler  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

On May 6, 2014, nearly 90 U.S. House members signed a bipartisan letter calling on the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to move forward on reforms to the Universal Service Fund (USF) to ensure that consumers in areas served by small, rate-of-return providers have the same choice among reasonably comparable telecom services at reasonably comparable rates that urban consumers already benefit from. But outdated rules tie USF support for small rate-of-return-regulated carriers to the provision of “plain old telephone service” (POTS), meaning their rural customers must purchase voice in order to receive affordable broadband. It is long past time to finish the job by updating USF for a marketplace that gives consumers a full set of choices between quality voice and broadband services. Small rural carriers have worked hard to provide innovative services to some of the most difficult-to-serve parts of our country, only to see obsolete, anti-consumer rules put broadband out of the reach of some consumers by unnecessarily cutting support.

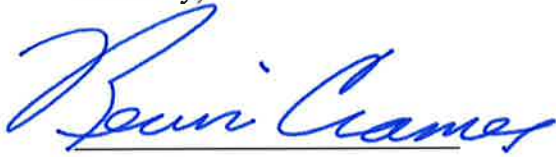
The FCC is in its fourth year of work on the Connect America Fund (CAF) that distributes USF support to larger price cap carriers and – because it isn’t tied specifically to the purchase of voice – enables those providers to offer broadband-only service to their rural customers. The amount of time it has taken just to implement the CAF for 13 larger carriers – a number of whom have indicated the CAF still might not work for them – makes clear that a much simpler and straightforward plan that similarly empowers rate-of-return carriers and their customers is needed. Long-term options for USF support modifications can and certainly should be explored as well, but not at the expense of an immediate, targeted solution to the issue highlighted in this and last year’s letters.

We continue to support efforts to update USF while applying appropriate, sufficient program budgets and ensuring USF distributions are invested prudently and reasonably, which helps provide the credibility necessary for the FCC to fulfill its statutory mandate. Previous USF reform stumbles have hindered rural broadband investment; and your agency now has an opportunity to provide certainty to small, rural carriers, encourage investment in rural broadband, and offer consumers greater choice by finally reforming USF for the broadband era. We look forward to working with you to accomplish in the very near future what already has broad

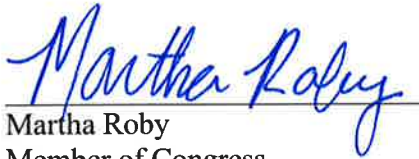
support in Congress and will be essential to providing all Americans with the opportunity to participate in the global broadband economy.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Kevin Cramer  
Member of Congress



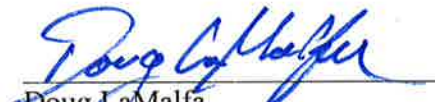
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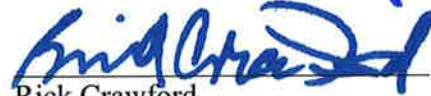
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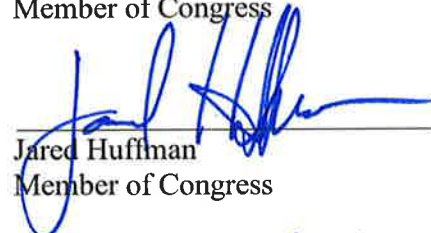
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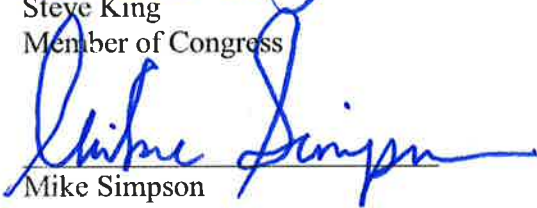
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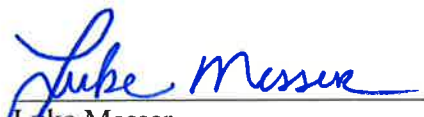
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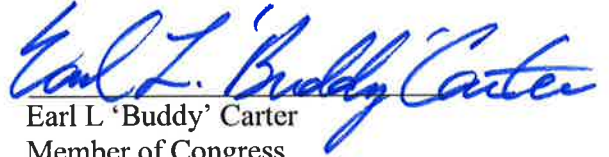
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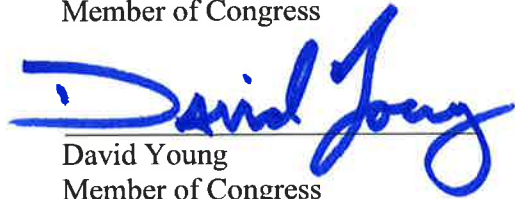
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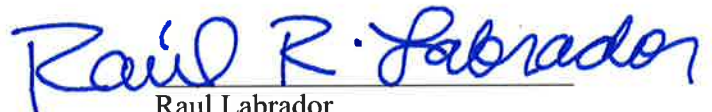
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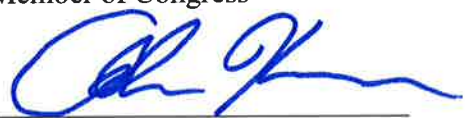
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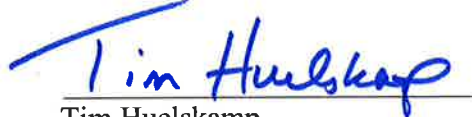
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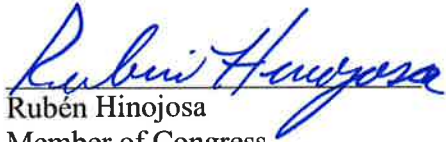


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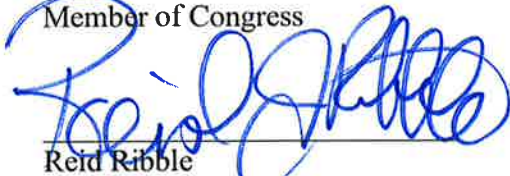
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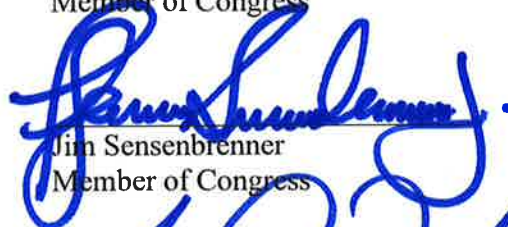
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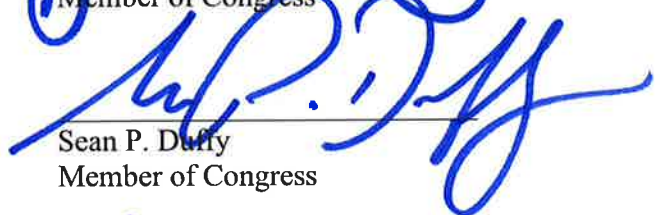
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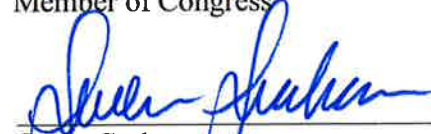
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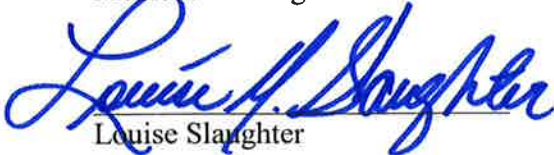


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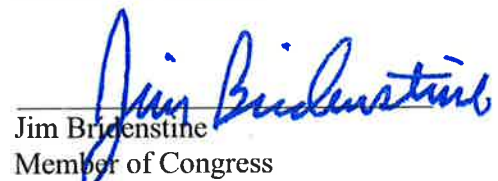
  
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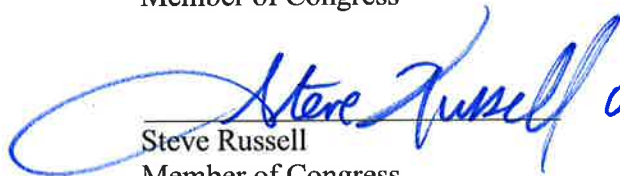
  
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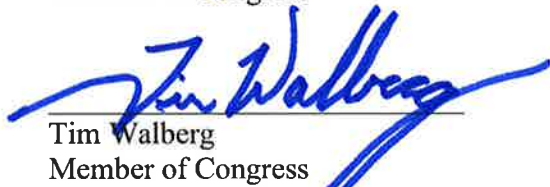
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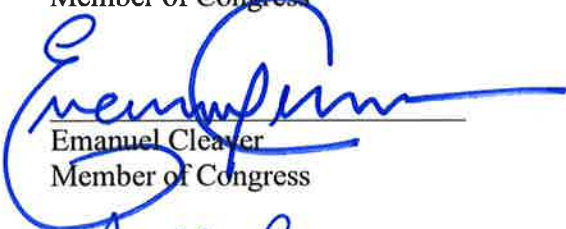
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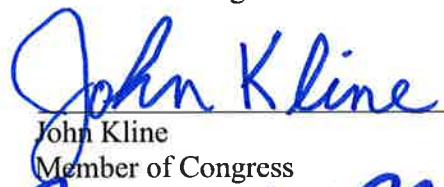
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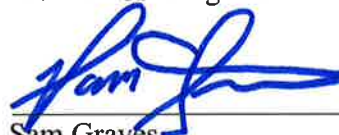
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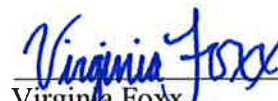
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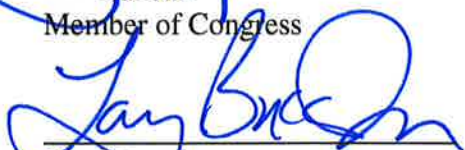
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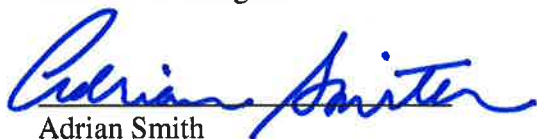
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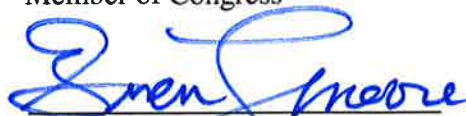
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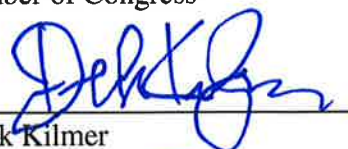
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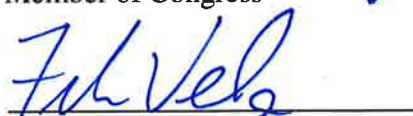
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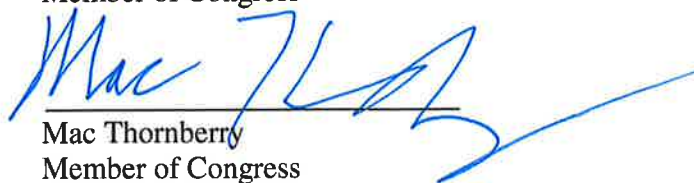
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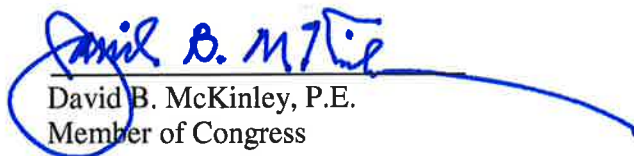
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